United Nations E/CN.7/2015/NGO/1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
24 February 2015

English only

Commission on Narcotic Drugs
Fifty-eighth session
Vienna, 9-17 March 2015
Item 5 of the provisional agenda*
Implementation of the Political Declaration and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem: follow-up to the high-level review by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, in view of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem to be held in 2016

Written statement submitted by EURAD

The Secretary-General has received the following paper, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.7/2015/1

V.15-01239 (E) 240215 250215

Please recycle

Written statement submitted by EURAD*

EURAD is an ECOSOC registered NGO, of over 50 grassroots organizations who deliver drug prevention, treatment, recovery, alternative sentencing and rehabilitation programmes across Europe and beyond. In preparation for the 58th Commission of Narcotic Drugs, we would like to take this opportunity to deliver input into the UNGASS 2016 preparatory process. This document therefore outlines the priorities of our members towards the UNGASS 2016 process.

Public Health

The movement towards drug policies which incorporate public health is one which EURAD strongly supports and a move which we hope Member States will support during the UNGASS process.

For some working in drug policy, however, there may be confusion over what a "public health approach" is. Some may understand "a public health approach" as a purely clinical health sector approach, yet such a narrow understanding of public health ignores the need for vital population level interventions which reduce exposure to risk factors, help shape wider social norms and prevent the initiation of illicit drug use and production in the first place. Although a strong health sector response is critical, public health threats cannot be solved in the treatment system alone. They must be addressed by prevention and broad, population based policies that limit the extent of the problem.

To this end, we urge Member States to investigate how international, regional and national economic and social policies create environments whereby the most vulnerable people in Europe are more likely to develop drug dependency problems. We also encourage Member States to better reflect the spirit of the WHO Alma Ata and Rio Political Declaration in their commitments during the UNGASS 2016 process.

Drug Treatment, Harm Reduction and Recovery

We believe in a wide range of treatment services for people with drug related problems, as reflected in the EU Drugs Strategy. We feel government representatives should endorse a whole spectrum of drug treatment services, rather than one set of specific interventions. **We therefore urge Member States throughout the UNGASS 2016 process to support a wide range of drug demand reduction measures, which should include the equally important and mutually reinforcing measures of prevention (environmental, universal, selective and indicated), early detection and intervention, risk and harm reduction, treatment, rehabilitation, social reintegration and recovery.**

Alternative Development

In a recent survey carried out with our members, all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that alternative development should be considered as an important component of tackling the world drug problem. Our network would like to challenge the view held by some organizations that reducing illicit

* The present statement is reproduced in the form in which it was received.

cultivation is unachievable or inappropriate. Instead, we argue that alternative development has not been invested in at anywhere near the appropriate level and that the UNGASS 2016 process should be used as an opportunity to review how alternative development can be embraced as part of an effective long-term strategy that aims to improve the livelihoods of those living in drug-producing areas as well as reducing illicit drug supply at the same time.

To this extent, we urge Member States to strongly support effective alternative development measures as well as to advocate for the rights of those living in drug-producing areas (for example the right to basic education, health care and citizenship).

Human Rights

International drug policy is wounded by episodic, sparse as well as severe human rights violations. Increasingly, such violations are used as evidence for reframing, restructuring or even removing the international drug control architecture. We encourage Member States to speak out against practices which breach human rights.

We support Member States in advocating for the following rights during the UNGASS 2016 process:

- The right to life and the abolition of the death penalty.
- The right for children to be protected from illicit drug use, trafficking and production as prescribed in Article 33 of the Convention of the Right of The Child.
- The right of adults and children to access drug treatment services.
- The right for all children to access basic education and health care.
- The right to citizenship so that people can enter licit areas of employment.
- The right to health care and for the right to be free from non-consensual treatment and torture.
- The right to access essential pain medication for surgery and palliative care.
- The right to proportionate sentencing.

Inequality

We believe that inequality is widely ignored in regional and international drug policy discussions and agreements.

Evidence suggests that individuals in highly unequal societies have incentives to engage outside legal markets and in crime. Research shows that a 1 per cent increase in the Gini coefficient appears to increase crime rates by between 1 and 4 per cent. For reference, the most unequal of the developed countries (Portugal) has a coefficient of below .4 whereas the average for Latin America is .52. There is also much evidence about the relationship between drug use and inequality both on country as well as individual levels.

We urge Member States to prioritise the issue of inequality within the UNGASS 2016 process, as we believe that solutions to reduce inequality could have the

capacity to impact strongly on illicit drug production and drug use and dependency.

Civil Society Engagement

EURAD is committed to ensuring that the voices of grassroots organizations reach the UNGASS 2016 process, via our membership of the EU Civil Society Forum on Drugs, the Vienna NGO Committee on Drugs and the Civil Society Task Force.

We would like to encourage Member States to support a transparent process of civil society participation throughout the duration of the UNGASS 2016 process and would like to thank delegations as well as the UNODC for their efforts so far.